A MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF MOSIER April 24, 2020

With social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, many families are experiencing increased at-home device use for work, education, and personal purposes. In March, global Internet traffic spiked to double its normal rate. Increased online activity comes with heightened cybersecurity risks for the whole family. To mitigate risk on all fronts, our residents are encouraged to educate their children and teens on cybersecurity best practices.

Kids are more susceptible to cyber threats based on manipulation, such as online predators, identity theft, phishing scams, stealthy in-application (app) charges, and trendy apps with suspicious data-collecting purposes. Poor cybersecurity habits, especially on shared devices, accounts, and Wi-Fi networks, can compromise your family's privacy. Cybercrime is surging during this uncertain time, so it is particularly important to provide children with essential cyber knowledge and tools.

Utilize the following cyber guidance to protect the kids in your life:

1. **Teach children how to use privacy settings** on their favorite online games, apps, and platforms. The Sheriff's Office on-line safety resource page offers information about privacy and security guides for specific platforms.
2. **Secure connected toys and games** like app-controlled toy cars, stuffed animals, dolls, wearable technology, video games, and educational mobile devices. Use strong, unique passwords for each. If you suspect an account has been breached, immediately change the password or disable the account.
3. **Teach teens how to safely use popular apps and platforms like TikTok and Zoom.** Remind them about the privacy risks associated with many new apps, especially those affiliated with foreign governments. Encourage them to review account permissions and regularly install updates and patches.
4. **Remind children of the risks related to sharing sensitive information online**. This includes names and ages, home addresses, phone numbers, and locations, and applies also to their siblings and friends. Explain how malicious actors can use that information to steal identities or hack devices. Educate them about phishing scams and social engineering attempts designed to collect sensitive information.
5. **Remain engaged with kids' online habits.** Ask about friends and followers, and remind them not to accept requests from strangers. Help children identify safe and trusted websites and apps. Remind them not to open or respond to suspicious or unsolicited links, texts, emails, and other online messages.
6. **Stay up to date on the latest apps, technology, and privacy settings**. Visit StaySafeOnline.org and other trusted websites for updated information on how to protect yourself and your kids online. Additional resources include: FTC Kids Online, Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI), StopBullying.gov, and CISA Parent and Educator Resources.

With your continued strong support, your sheriff's office will work to promote crime prevention and public safety efforts in Fauquier County and all across Virginia.

In the remaining year ahead, you can count on your Sheriff's office to focus on combating crime, promoting public safety, and keeping recidivism rates low in our community.

Thank you for all you to do to support the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office!

Sincerely,

Robert P. Mosier
Sheriff, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office

Working together, law enforcement and our local communities will make a positive impact for the future.